The Courts of Love Revived

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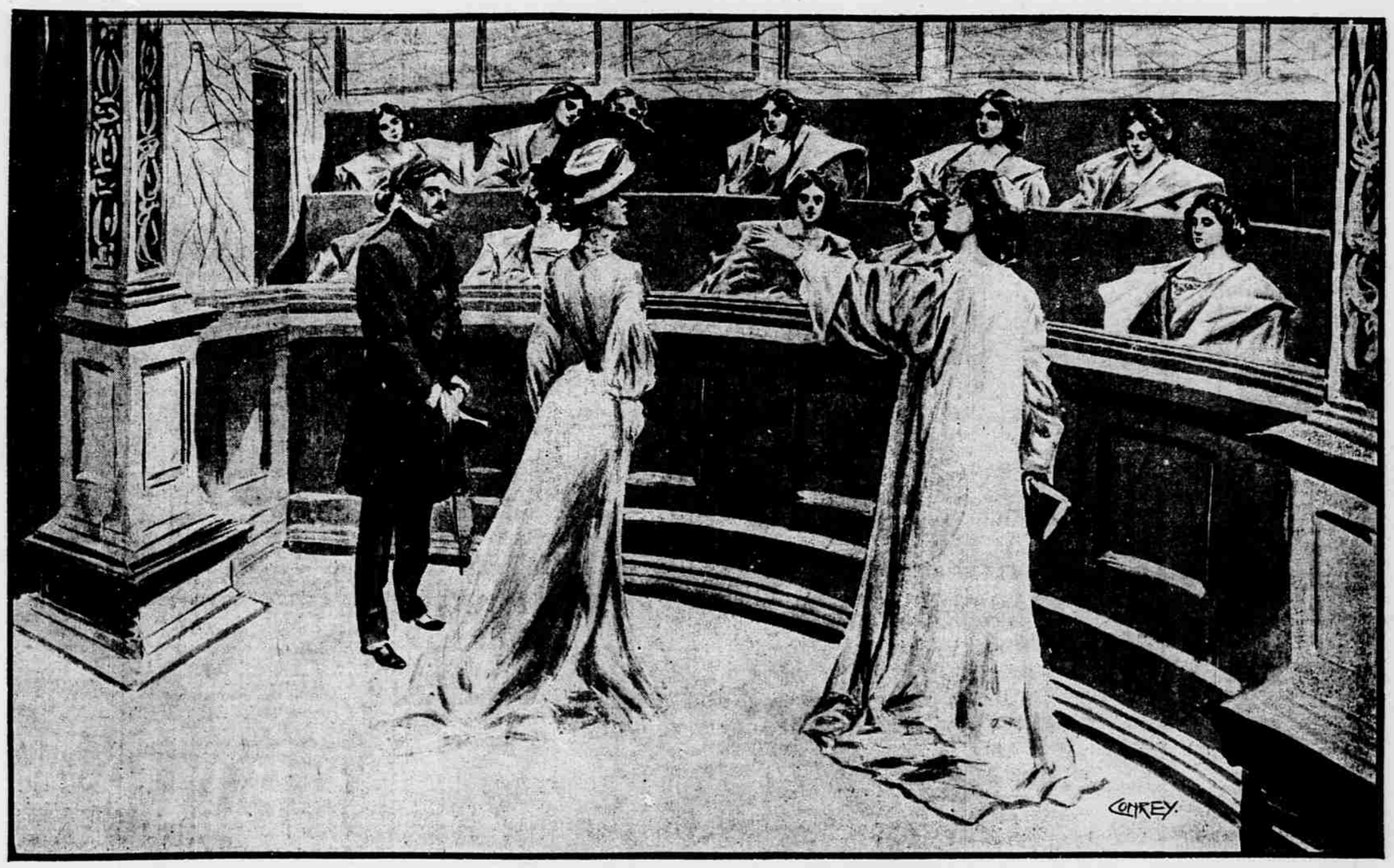

IT WAS ORDERED THAT THE KNIGHT BE REHABILITATED IN FAVOR AND REINSTATED IN GRACE.

WRITTEN FOR THE SUNDAY REPUBLIC.

The 'varsities are changing their chairs. It is high time. When we went to school we were taught everything it was easiest to forget. Our curriculum comprised the largest possible number of subjects of which the least possible use could be made. No doubt they were designed for our good. Yet we are unable to conjecture what difference it would have made had they been intended for our harm. We are unable to recall a single one of them.

Now, however, things are looking up. Oxford, for instance, is throwing out Greek. Here, generally, instead of the mummeries of the classics there are modern tongues and history in lieu of calculus. That is all very well. But the change is susceptible of improvement.

Learning is not fashionable. Society has a great contempt for it. That contempt, while hardly of the kind which familiarity breeds, is none the less obvious. If you do not believe us go and see. You will find it stupid to be wise all alone. For alone you will be. The more you know the more diligently you will be avoided. And very naturally. When your Red Badge of Culture does not put your hostess to sleep it makes her feel ignorant. Neither proceeding is societyfied.

No, indeed. A knowledge of history, however superficial, will not bring you invitations to dinner. It is the same with languages. You may develop into a polyglot and die a bounder. The majority of us want to see our names in the papers. The ambition is quite noble and highly American. But an acquaintance with Cicero, and even with Carnegie, won't help you to it.

It is for this reason that the change in chairs is susceptible of improvement. The better advancement and future prospects of the youth of the land demand that universities shall throw out history and languages as already they are throwing classics and calculus, and in their stead provide courses on What's What. And what is there but love and lucre?

Those two little things are the motor forces of society. Beside them, barring the fashions and the charm of medisance—we say medisance because it sounds so much more cosmopolitan than tittle-tattle—nothing counts. No, nothing. Moreover, they are as potent and disintegrating as radium. Then, too, instruction regarding them is really diverting. Students who take them up will not merely learn something, they will remember it.

RICHES AND ECONOMY.

To be rich, for instance, seems complex. It is very simple. In an educational magazine not long ago Professor Carnegie, Professor Depew and other savants indicated the process. According to Professor Carnegie you must push. Manners do not make the millionaire. Professor Depew advocated economy. A dollar in the bank is worth two on a margin. Professor Mills advised not more than eight hours' sleep. The other fellow must not catch you napping. Professor Clews recommended investments. We believe that he has a few to sell. Now add all that up, and wealth, which looked complex, becomes as easy as ping-pong.

Love is different. To love and to be loved seems simple. It is an art in itself. An art did we say? It is a philosophy, a theosophy, a panosophy in one. It is a science whereby the world, the flesh and the devil, the solar system, the universe—including what little we know of it, and all that we do not—are reduced to a single being.

Sometimes to two beings. Occasionally to three. But though that number is odd, there is no luck in it. It is dangerous, in addition to being inconvenient. You never have a spare moment, and are obliged to lie like a thief. Two are less exasperating. Even with one carefully selected being your hands are apt to be pretty full. When that being is legally your very own you will find it advantageous to confine your attentions to her. Anyway, it is generally admitted that it is better to have loved your wife than never to have loved at all.

These remarks, of course, are purely ethical. Love is not that by a long shot. Love is a vicious little chap. He is essentially selfish, and, though little, the biggest tyrant out. A statue is not more callous. A hyena is less cruel. Personally, we should prefer a cobra about the house. A cobra you can elude. But not a bore—with civility at least, and when that little chap is not sticking pins in you he rivals our best selling novelists in the art of boring you stiff.

These observations have a false air of originality which, as is our duty, we hasten to disclaim. They have all history for support. Out of mythology, and even there apart from the account which Apuleius gave of Cupid and Psyche, there is not a single story of happily begun and happily ending love. No, not one. As pages turn and faces emerge, always when they are not weeping they are yawning.

LOVE IS A POEM!

Why? Because love is not merely a philosophy. It is a poem whose strophes age cannot construe and youth cannot scan. Because of all subjects it is the most discussed and the least understood. Because it consists in the affection of some one else. Because affections are like fashions, they will go out. Because the angel who at twenty appeals at thirty has been known to appal.

At the opera now and then you may, if you are in luck, hear Cherubino ask the ladies who stand about to tell him what love is. The ladies make no answer. Not because they are rude. Still less because they are ignorant. But because Mozart did not care to have them disturb the innocence of the lad with an aria to the effect that love is the fusion of two egotisms. Truth should be charming or else withheld.

Truth is the residuum of the sciences known as exact. Among these sciences love, once upon a time, just escaped admittance. By way of compensation it was codified. What is more to the point, the code became law. Judgments in accordance therewith were rendered in courts open and plenary.

In 1907 these courts are to be revived. They are to be revived for the pleasure, it may be, but certainly for the instruction, of visitors to an exposition which is to be then held in Milan. You may have wondered what we were driving at. There is the reason of these remarks. There, too, is a tip for St. Louis. There also, perhaps, is the model of the schooling which the youth of our country lack.

We inject that "perhaps" because we are skeptical by trade. But we live in hopes. Meanwhile, Milan being remote, 1907 far away and St. Louis uncertain, a summary of the instruction may contain a few hints.

The elements of this instruction are rumored to have originated in Broceliande, a country which, as everybody knows, lies somewhere within the confines of the Arthurian myth. By whom they were evolved is undetermined. But it has been authoritatively suspected that they were cradled in the manuals of pure courtesy with which chivalry was familiar and which society has forgot. Anyway, they once existed, and existing filtered into Provence, where a parliament of peeresses did them over into a pandect of which the statutes survive. Here are some of them. By way of commentary we may note that licit means lawful, and illicit the reverse. There is nothing like making things clear. But, oyez:

It is illicit to kiss and tell.

It is illicit to love any one whom it would be illicit to marry.

It is illicit to love two at a time.

It is licit to be beloved by two, by three, by any number.

It is illicit to be open-armed and close-fisted.

It is licit for a woman to love her husband. If she can.

It is illicit for a lover to do aught that might displease his lady.

It is licit for a lady to be less circumspect, et cetera and so forth.

UNDERSTANDING OF THE HEART.

These statutes, always candid, sometimes are profound. They disclose an understanding of the heart and its subtleties. It was over matters of this delicate nature that the Courts of Love claimed—and exercised—jurisdiction. The judges were dames of high degree. At the time, in cases of tort and even of felony, the lord of a fief possessed the right of justice, high and low. But there are crimes now which the law cannot reach. It was the same way then. There were, and are, contentions which no mere male, however enfeifed, may adjust. It was to remedy this defect that the wives of the signeurs erected tribunals of their own. Their strength was their weakness. They were pretty and that appealed. They were patrician and that appeased. They took themselves seriously, too, and that must have been very satisfactory. Moreover, if not always clement, occasionally they were quaint.

Here is an instance. A confidant charged by a friend with messages of love found the young person so much to his taste that he addressed her in his own behalf. Instead of being repulsed his advances were encouraged. Whereupon the injured party brought suit. The prothonotary of the court relates that the plaintiff, having humbly prayed that the fraud be submitted to the Countess of Champagne, the latter, sitting in banco with sixty dames, heard the complaint, and after due deliberation handed down the following decision: "It is ordered that the defendants be henceforth debarred from the frequentation of honest people."

Here is another case. A knight was commanded by his lady not to say or do anything publicly in her praise. It so fell about that her name was lightly taken. The knight challenged the defamer. Thereupon the lady contended that he had forfeited all claim to her regard. Action having been brought the court decided that the defence of a lady is never illicit, and it was ordered that the knight be rehabilitated in favor and reinstated in grace. Which, the prothonotary avers, was done.

But how? There is the beautiful part of it. To the Courts of Love no Sheriffs are attached. Judgments were enforced not by a constabulary, but by the community. Disregard of a decision entailed not loss of liberty, but loss of caste. In the case of a man there was exclusion from the field. Entrance was denied him at tournaments. In the case of a woman the drawbridges were up. Throughout the land there was no one to receive her. As a result the delinquent was rare. So, too, was contempt of the jurists.

GUIDING THE AFFECTIONS.

Such were the Courts of Love. Women then did more or less as they saw fit, and it was in order that they might do what was fittest that these tribunals were established. They had another purpose. In guiding the affections they educated them. Women were admonished to love and instructed how to. They were taught, we will assume, that they who please generally fail to please profoundly. They were further taught, we will also assume, that to please profoundly a woman should never let herself be wholly known. Even in her kisses there should be mystery. Moreover, they were taught, or ought to have been, that when to mystery there be added uncertainty, and the two be sufficiently fused, then the party of the second part is not merely profoundly pleased, but comfortably perplexed. The poor devil does not know where he is at.

For of all things mystery and perplexity disturb the imagination most. Of all factors in an enduring affection the most potent is imagination. The woman who leaves a man nothing to bother about leaves him nothing to dread. Inconstancy is the result. The brute turns to pastors new.

But the woman of whom a man is never sure has him crazy about her for the rest of his wretched career. He feels that he could cut his throat for her. When a man does not feel that way he has no feeling at all.

Maxims of this fastidious morality were, we assume without effort, handed out in the Courts of Love. Since the latter are to be revived in Milan, why not also at St. Louis? The more the merrier. Besides, we need them badly. In these days and in this part of the planet love has degenerated into a game. A very pretty game at that. Only when you are old enough to play it properly you are too old to play it at all. In which respect it is inferior to bridge whist.

That is all wrong. The principles of the sport should be taught at school—if not at St. Louis—with a post-graduate course in matrimony added. For it is a matter of common notoriety that through ignorance of these things the youth of the land have been obliged to go it blind, and many of them to Dakota. What is worse, the statistics are full of people who marry again and again before they begin to know how. All of which a proper course of sprouts would obviate.

And yet again it might not. Human nature is curiously invariable. With or without instruction in these matters, always has it preferred its own way. Babylonian tablets recently disinterred show that thousands of years ago it was quite the same that it is to-day. Since then knowledge has increased, but not wisdom. In matters ethical and cardiac we are not a bit more advanced than were our elders in the reign of Assurbanipal. Love to them was quite as alluring as it is to the rest of us and equally deceptive. They had their ideas on the subject, as we have our theories, and then as now these ideas and themes amount to just so much bosh, or—more elegantly and exactly—to three months of adoration, three months of introspection, thirty years of toleration, with the children to begin it all over new.

If the proposed revival of the Courts of Love at Milan, with possible illustrations of them at St. Louis, can alter that sort of thing we, for one, shall long to see them at work.

WATCHMAN "BEN" NULL HAS PREVENTED CROSSING

ACCIDENTS AT ELLENDALE FOR THE LAST FIFTEEN YEARS.

BEN NULL,
Who has been a crossing watchman at Ellendale for fifteen years.

THE STATION AT ELLENDALE,
Opposite which is "Ben's" watchhouse.

A unique character and widely known citizen in Ellendale is Ben Null, crossing watchman of the Missouri Pacific Railway. One-legged, gray-haired and slight, he cuts a strangely quaint figure standing or sitting beside the little watchhouse where he has done his duty faithfully for fifteen years.

He is at his post from 6 o'clock in the morning until 3 o'clock in the evening. He has experienced but four days of sickness in all that time.

All Ellendale knows "Ben." Not a woman, man or child passes his station without speaking to him.

There has never been an accident on his crossing.

"Ben" was born in Franklin County near Pacific, on a farm owned by his father, Dave Null. When 17 years old his old father lost a valuable farm by going on a friend's security. Ben then went to work as a section hand for the Missouri Pacific Railroad. After eighteen years of this life he injured his right leg and had to have it amputated. The company gave him his present position. He is married and has four children. His hours of loneliness are lightened by the visits of either his young daughter or his son. From his little cottage, a few blocks away on Old Manchester road, they daily bring him a steaming lunch.

His watchhouse is always warm. He is also janitor of the little brown-stone station just opposite his shanty. The station was erected the same year in which he first took charge of the crossing. L. D. Hopkins made the first fire in the stove and handed over the keys to "Ben." Mr. Hopkins was at that time a superintendent.

Only a few families lived in this vicinity when Null first became a crossing watchman. Charles W. Crutsinger is the oldest of these. Henry W. Carreras, the late Henry Wirthmuller and a Mr. Sanders were the other pioneers.

"Ben" has seen the little suburb grow until its boundaries have extended to Maplewood on one side and Benton on the other. He expects to live to see many other notable improvements.

He Had Earned a Day Off.

Irving Bacheller can always tell a story of the north country, and this is one of them.

"Up in St. Lawrence County," he said, "there was an old man who lived in a small village a few miles from Potsdam. Mr. Parker was an elder in the church, a good husband and father, and a worthy citizen, who was much respected in the community.

"One day he hitched up his team and went off with a load of produce from his farm to Potsdam. Night fell, but Parker did not return.

"His family was much frightened, for such a thing had never happened before, and they felt sure that some evil had befallen him.

"His son went to Potsdam and called at all his father's accustomed haunts, only to find that the old man had sold his potatoes and started for home before dark.

"The family remained in great distress all night and until the next afternoon, when Mr. Parker drove in at the big farm gate. The old man's clothes were torn, his face bruised, a small portion of his front scalp was missing, and his horse was broken-winded and all of a lather.

"He vouchsafed no explanation, but betook himself to bed, where he slept for fourteen hours, waking with a rich brown taste in his mouth.

"The matter got noised abroad, and eventually the minister and a brother elder called upon him.

"'Brother Parker,' said the minister solemnly, 'it appears to us that some explanation is due the church of events which have recently transpired, and we have called to see if you have anything to say about them.'

"The old man pondered awhile, and then asked: 'How long hev I been a member of the church, boy and man?'

"'Forty-six years, my brother.'

"'Hev I walked in the ways of the Lord pretty perpendiculair during that time?'

"'Yes. Brother Parker, you have served long and faithfully.'

"'Well,' said the old man, 'I thought so, too, 'n' I just thought I'd take a day off.'"

When Wizard Edison's Cunningly-Contrived Apparatus Failed.

"The world has seen a variety of achievements wrought by man, but no other has made such strides toward the perfection of industry and progress, toward the advancement of the whole world, as the application of electricity."

Thus spoke Lord Kelvin, and in justice he might have supplemented the same by stating that the Yankee wizard, Thomas A. Edison, has ever been the leader of the advance guard which has with such signal success explored that mystical electrical field.

However, the public prints have long been surfeited with stories of Edison's brilliant coups; and here, for variety's sake, is given the record of a failure.

When Edison first established his laboratory and electrical works over in New Jersey he had in his employ an Irishman named Barney Gilhooly.

Barney was engineer and fireman—in short, he was general utility man around the entire Edison plant. He lived back of the meadows, some four miles from the factory, and it was his custom to drive daily back and forth.

Now, like all the rest of mankind, Barney liked to sleep in the morning as long as possible, and he conjured his brain as to how to feed his horse in the morning without a personal visit to the barn.

Finally he enlisted the services of his illustrious employer, explaining that it would be a great convenience if by some button and wire arrangement the morning ration of oats could be doled out to the horse. In that way he claimed that when he had prepared and eaten his own breakfast Dobbin also would be ready for the road.

Mr. Edison readily grasped the idea, and that very day, accompanied by an assistant, he repaired to Barney's place and installed an electrical appliance which he anticipated would fill the bill.

It was so arranged that if the oats were placed in a receptacle at the top of a chute, the pressing of a button at the house would put machinery in motion to do the rest.

And so it came to pass that on the morning of the automatic oatfeeder's debut Barney pushed the magnical button, serene in the belief that the Wizard's mechanism would fulfill its mission.

But, alas! the best-laid plans of electricians, as well as those of other folk, 'gang aft agley."

Dobbin had not been initiated into the mysteries of the new-fangled arrangement, and, in the still watches of the morning, when he was dreaming of the millennium of automobilism and blue-grass pastures, the infernal creaking of wires, followed by an avalanche of oats, convinced the good steed that the hour of fate had struck.

In fact, he was so frightened he reared back with violence and crashed through the side of the barn; and when inquiring Barney arrived on the scene Dobbin was complacently picking up apples under a tree in the garden.

Since that memorable morning, Mr. Edison's automatic feeder has never been operated, and Barney is still feeding his horse in the good old-fashioned way.

FEEDING LIVING CORAL AT AQUARIUM.

Delicate Operation Which Requires Exercise of Considerable Care.

"Of all the inhabitants of the Aquarium," remarked Custodian Spencer of that institution as he stood over a small glass compartment gently manipulating a slender stick across the surface of a group of living coral, "the specimens in this group"—indicating a row of glass cylindrical-shaped vessels containing the coral and sea anemones—"require the greatest care at feeding time."

These extremely beautiful but delicate specimens from the ocean's depths remain in the laboratory, and are not on public view, says the New York Times. According to the custodian, they have the most capricious and exacting appetites and are only to be tempted by the daintiest of morsels.

In feeding the living coral minute particles are impaled on the point of a slender stick, which is gently drawn across the waving surface of the group, and it is often a matter of an hour before one group of coral has satisfied its rather exacting appetite, as each individual mouth of the hundreds that contribute to the one general stomach must have its quota in turn, and great care must be taken that none of the food falls uneaten to the bottom of the vessel, as the slightest contamination of the water is fatal to these specimens.

With the sea anemones, of which the Aquarium has quite a variety, almost exactly similar conditions prevail. Although capable of taking food in larger quantities than the coral, the anemones are very capricious and irregular in their feeding, some days taking the food offered voraciously and then for days at a time refusing to be tempted by the most luscious morsels.

"Contrary animals, anyway, these anemones," complained the custodian; "with all the years they have been under careful observation in aquariums the world over we have comparatively little accurate knowledge of them. That fellow over there"—pointing to a gorgeous, orange-colored specimen from Bermuda with a spread of tendrils covering at least a foot—"has been here a couple of years and has been a continual source of worry in the matter of his feeding habits. He takes fits of fasting, and often goes a couple of weeks without taking food, but just about the time we have given up hope and firmly believe he is attempting suicide, back comes his appetite, and for days the dinner bell can't ring too often."

HOW MARCONI SENDS A WIRELESS MESSAGE.

"All ready!" he cried to the electrician who stood in the power-room watching the inventor through the long connecting hallway.

A lever was pulled and a dim hum filled the room. The indicator of the volt meter began to race past all sorts of high figures on the face of the dial.

"Now I'll send to Poldhu." He pressed the key.

There was a blinding flash of bluish light, for with each movement of the key great sparks jumped two inches between the two silver knobs of the induction coil.

One knob of this coil is connected with the earth, forming the ground connection, the other with the wire leading to the aerial wires. Each spark means an oscillating impulse from the battery to the aerial wire, and from the wire the oscillations of ether occur which carry through space at the speed of 187,000 miles a second.

With the blinding flash accompanying each movement of the key occurs a report to be compared accurately with the noise attending the discharge of a Krag-Jorgensen.

It was terrifying—the light, the noise, and in the midst of it all the inventor calmly pressing the key, making more noise, more light. Imagine a company of infantry firing at will in a tunnel and you can understand the sound that accompanies sending a message.

Marconi, who stuffs cotton in his ears when sending, is now experimenting to deaden this sound.

But somehow, to one impressed by the fact that here, in this very room, a message was being sent through the air across that gloomy stretch of 3,000 miles of ocean, the noise and light seemed fitting—gave the proper touch of the superhuman, of force, of intensity.—World's Work.